

LONG-TERM AIR TRANSPORTATION STUDY (LATS)

Washington State Aviation Planning Council

PHASE III PROJECT SUMMARY

Background

In 2005, the governor signed into law Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 5121, which authorizes a long-term air transportation planning study for general aviation and commercial airports statewide. The primary focus of the study will be on commercial aviation as well as the four Special Emphasis Regions identified in the legislation – Tri-Cities, Spokane, Puget Sound, and southwest Washington.

The legislation is also known as the Washington State Long-Term Air Transportation Study (LATS). The purpose of LATS is to understand what capacity currently exists in aviation facilities and what will be needed to meet future demand for air transportation. The study also includes a review and evaluation of air cargo and high-speed passenger rail transportation.

LATS will study existing conditions, system dynamics, performance, trends, and market factors within the Washington State system of airports. The process will identify how the system meets current demand and what is needed to meet future air transportation demands regionally and statewide. The study recommendations and findings will be integrated into the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS), and regional and local transportation plans. The study will also assist in aligning federal, state, and regional objectives and priorities and help clarify airport sponsor objectives.

This study will be preformed consistent with ESSB 5121 and Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR) Advisory Circular (AC) 150/5070-7 “The Airport System Planning Process.” A consultant team will work together in an effort to develop a statewide aviation system plan and airport capital improvement program framework to address air transportation over the next 25 years.

Aviation Planning Council

During Phase III, a ten member Washington State Aviation Planning Council will be convened to develop recommendations regarding specific policies and strategies to meet statewide commercial and general aviation needs. The policies and strategies will be based on the assessment and analysis completed during Phases I and II of LATS.

In order for the Council to fulfill this mandate, they will have to be well informed as to both the nature of the specific issues and the implications of alternative strategies that might be pursued in order to address these issues. It is the responsibility of the

consultant team and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to provide the foundation and administrative support for the Council to develop well reasoned recommendations that reflect an understanding of the underlying issues, the advantages and disadvantages of alternative policies and actions, and an appreciation of the respective positions of Washington residents, businesses, and aviation stakeholders as they pertain to specific system challenges.

Project Objectives

In accordance with ESSB 5121, the Council is required to:

- Make recommendations, based on the findings of the assessment and analysis completed under Phase I (RCW 47.68.390) and Phase II (RCW 47.68.400), regarding how best to meet the statewide commercial and general aviation capacity needs;
- Determine which regions of the state are in need of improvement regarding the matching of existing, or projected, airport facilities, and the long-range capacity needs at airports within the region expected to reach capacity before the year 2030;
- Make recommendations regarding the placement of future commercial and general aviation airport facilities designed to meet the need for improved aviation planning in the region; and
- Include public input in making final recommendations.

Proposed Work Plan Elements

Supporting Research Needs

During the course of the Phase I and II process, additional research needs were identified by the Aviation Technical Committee to support the Aviation Planning Council process. These studies include the following:

- *Policy Support and Review* – The primary purpose of this task will be to review existing statewide air transportation policies together with the WTP, regional transportation plans, and national policies to assist the Council in their deliberation on how best to meet the state’s long-term multimodal transportation needs.
- *Assessment of Military Airfields* – Consistent with this FAA requirement, this task will include an assessment of military airfields in Washington State to determine if military airfields will be available to address aviation capacity demand over the planning period. This task will support FAA Order 5090.3C Field Formulation of the NPIAS.

- *NPIAS Review and Recommendations* – An important function of the state planning process is to identify airports that meet national interest criteria. While final selection of NPIAS airports is determined by the FAA, FAR AC 150/5070-7, “The Airport System Planning Process” identifies a role for state aviation agencies in the process.

Aviation Planning Council Support

The Council will meet over a fourteen-month period. It is anticipated that there will be a total of 11 meetings and workshops. Key issues before the Council will include developing policies on the state’s interests in air transportation and selecting a preferred alternative or alternatives for implementing the plan.

Public Participation & Outreach

The State of Washington is committed to the development of an airport system plan that reflects input and perspective from aviation stakeholders, government officials, and the general public. In order to accomplish this objective, processes must be in place to communicate project objectives, allow stakeholder input, and inform the public on key project issues and findings.

This work element will include:

- *Electronic Town Hall Meetings* – Two Electronic Town Hall meetings will be held online, via a moderated session with 150 participants each, who would be recruited from Knowledge Network’s panel sample. Participants will be drawn from a statistical representation of the state demographics. The meetings will be timed to support the deliberations of the Aviation Planning Council.
- *Online Survey* – An online survey using Knowledge Networks will be used to obtain feedback on Phase III efforts. Knowledge Networks has a scientifically selected sample of Washington State households, including those without computers or access to the Internet, to which it has provided online access. This sample totals more than 1,000 Washington State residents. The 15-minute survey will assess public opinion on the issues discussed during Phase III by the Council.
- *Regional Meetings* – A total of four meetings will be held across the state to gather public input on key issues, recommended policies, implementation strategies, and findings of the Council. Meetings would be held during the mid-point and final stages of the process. Public comments will be incorporated into the final aviation system plan and implementation recommendations.
- *E-Newsletters* – Four E-Newsletters will be distributed by WSDOT during key milestones of the study to announce opportunities for public input and to inform the public about study findings.
- *Media Releases* – Media releases will be issued to announce the dates of public workshops, meetings, key study findings, and other study-related information.
- *Web Site* – WSDOT Aviation’s Web site will feature a special section dedicated to LATS with two primary purposes: a) provide information about the status of

LATS, including media releases, meeting dates, technical and support information, relevant publications, and meeting summaries and b) solicit input and comments from the public.

Air Transportation Alternatives Analysis

The purpose of this task will be to develop proposed alternatives to address recommended actions by the Council to meet statewide needs up to 2030. Recommended alternatives will be based on airport classifications, overall transportation policies, and federal guidelines, with generalized cost estimates and the financial feasibility of the proposed improvements. The alternatives should consider short-term, mid-term, and long-term (25-year) planning periods for commercial, general aviation, air cargo, and schedule passenger service.

Statewide Aviation Capital Improvement Program

A critical element of the third phase of the study will be to develop a process for plan implementation. This task will identify procedures and analytical tools to develop a multi-year statewide Airport Capital Improvement Plan (ACIP) to assist in identifying airport improvement priorities to support statewide and regional airport development projects that support the aviation system. Federal and state criteria and performance objectives will be used to evaluate projects based on local project priorities from airport facility plans and federal and statewide interests. The final product will be an ACIP implementation plan and procedural framework for WSDOT and FAA project programming. This element will be conducted in close coordination with the FAA.

Draft and Final Air Transportation System Plan Document

This task includes preparation of draft and final Phase III documents, which will include preparation of the statewide aviation system, procedural strategy, and the Council-recommended legislative package.

Legislative Package Proposal

Developing a legislative package is a crucial element in the implementation of the air transportation plan. The package may include proposed legislative amendments and funding.